

# Uncertainty in contemporary urban planning concepts and methods

What we (still) can learn from Garden Cities and New Towns

20th Century New Towns: Archetypes and Uncertainties International Conference

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Archetypes



Uncertainties

collective and typical images  
past & present  
timeless & persistent  
unconscious  
*(Jung, 1976)*

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Archetypes

collective and typical images  
past & present  
timeless & persistent  
unconscious  
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Uncertainties

collective & > individual  
future  
unstable and transient (?)  
conscious (?)

# growing uncertainty in contemporary urban planning



Archetypes

Uncertainties

a typical image: the city of  
oppositions:  
town **vs.** country  
concentration **vs.** dispersion

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Archetypes

**a typical image:** the city of  
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Uncertainties

**reality:** complexity & diversity of  
urban form:  
town **and** country **and**  
concentration **and** dispersion

# growing uncertainty in contemporary urban planning

we will explore these **oppositions**, through **archetypes** and **uncertainties**, applying them to the Garden City model, the post-war **New Towns** program in Britain and to what **contemporary urban planning** - as a still open and incomplete process - can learn from them.

1. **between city and country's urbanity**
2. **the coexistence of the compact and of the dispersed**
3. **diversity in the New Towns post-war program**

# between city and country's urbanity

“(...) archetype of the city that no longer corresponds to the reality  
(...) as an opposition between city and countryside (...)”

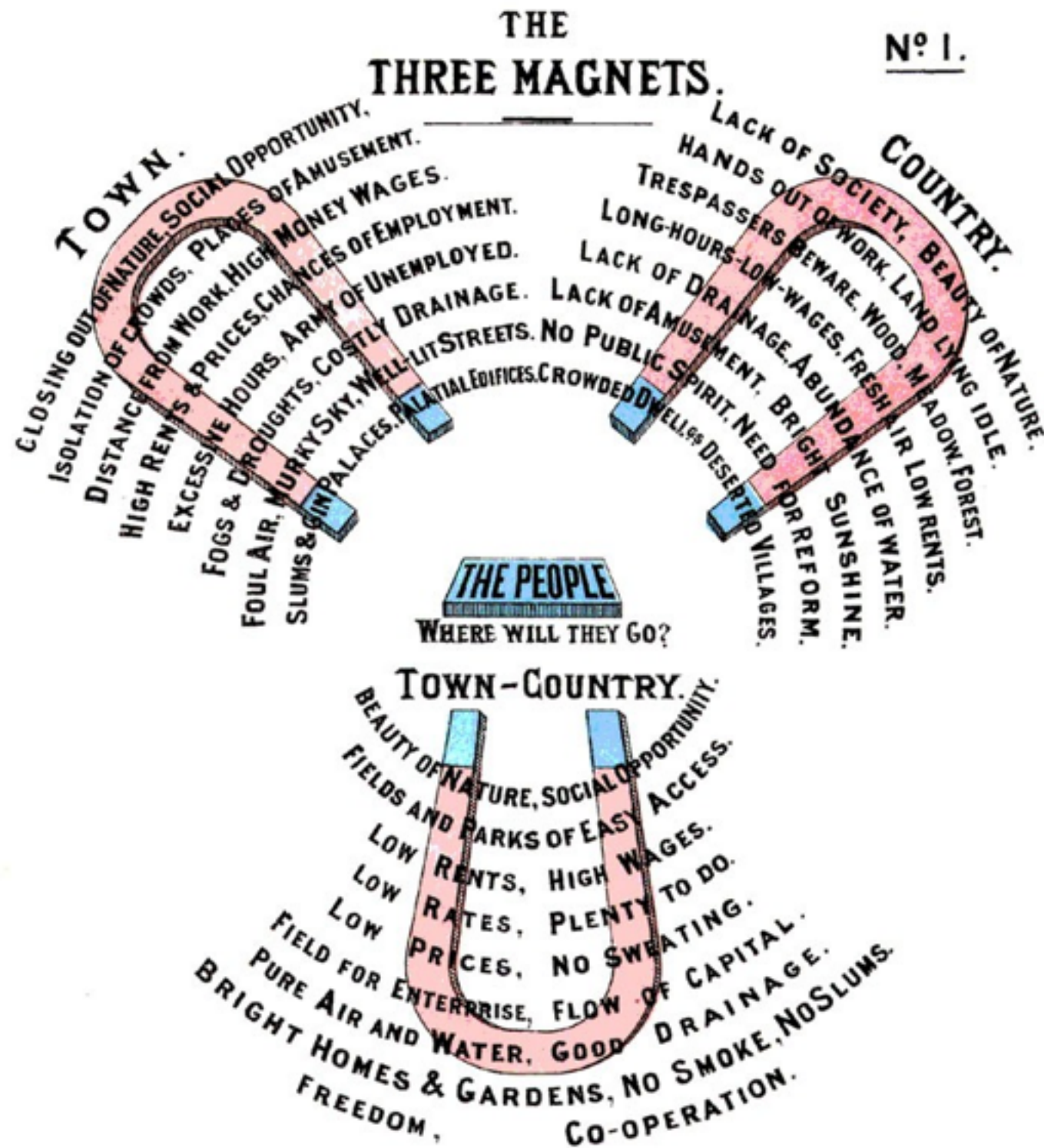


# between city and country's urbanity

Middle Ages: complementary relationship and economic social interdependence between city and country (Mumford, 1961)

Industrial Revolution(s): new realities, neither pure cities nor countryside - the emergence of the “urban” (Choay, 1994)

# between city and country's urbanity



## between city and country's urbanity



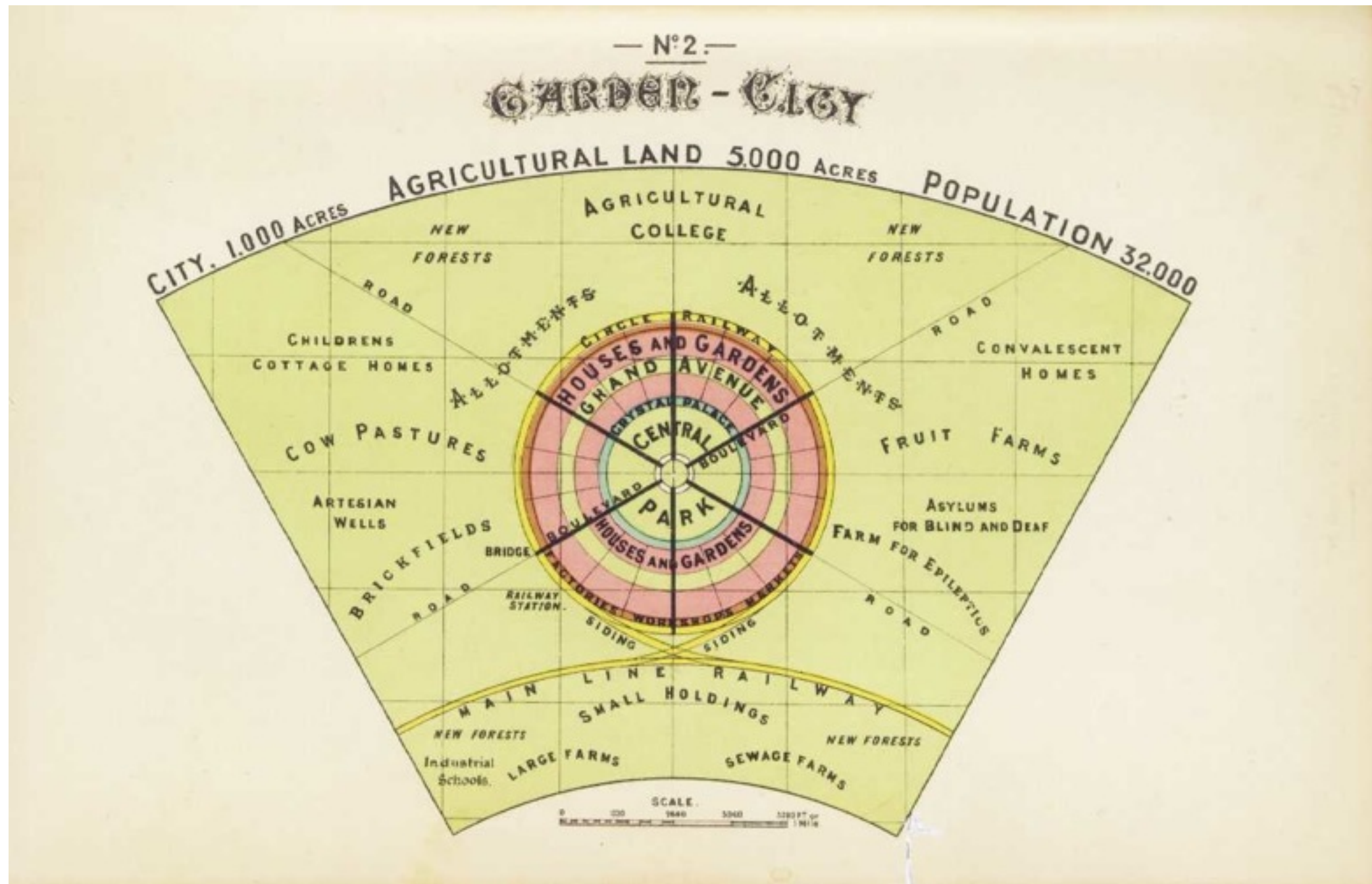
Porto, Portugal (B. Moreira)



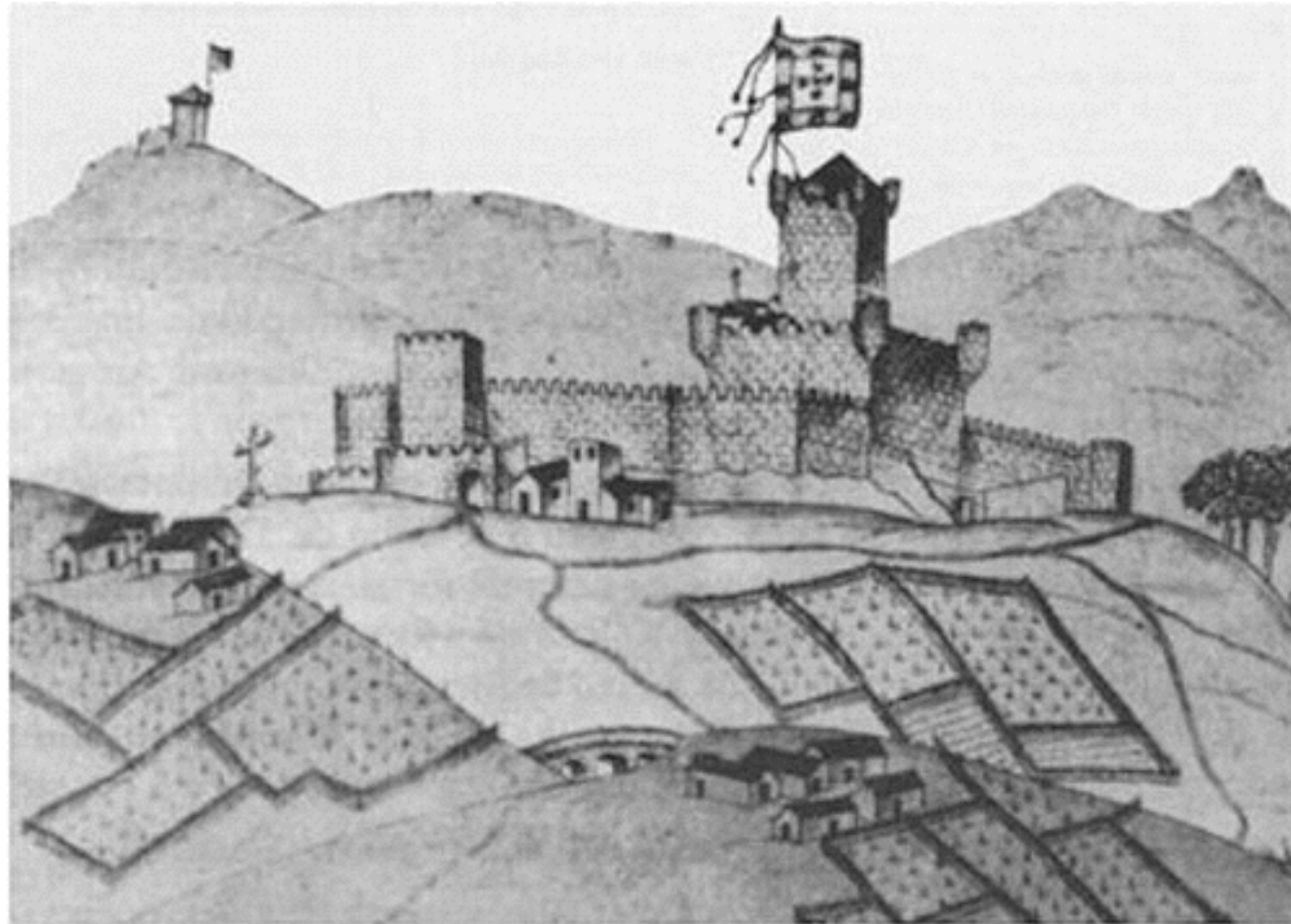
Monsanto Village, Portugal (A. Magalhães)



**between city and country's urbanity**



**the coexistence of the compact and of the dispersed**

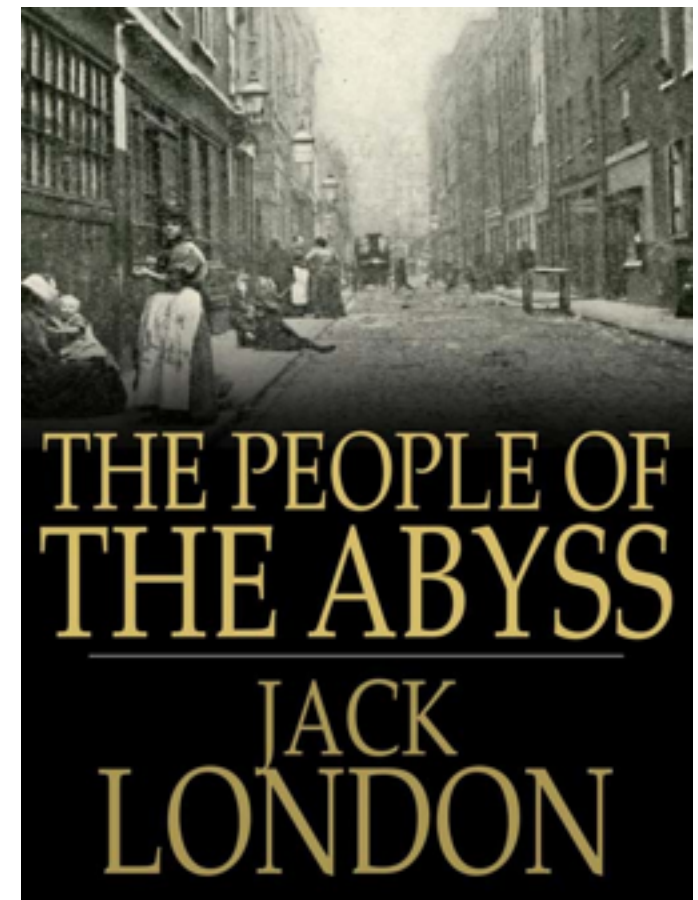


Chaves, Portugal (drawing by Duarte D'Armas, early 16th century)

# the coexistence of the compact and of the dispersed



The People of the Abyss, London's East End, 1902 (photo: Jack London)





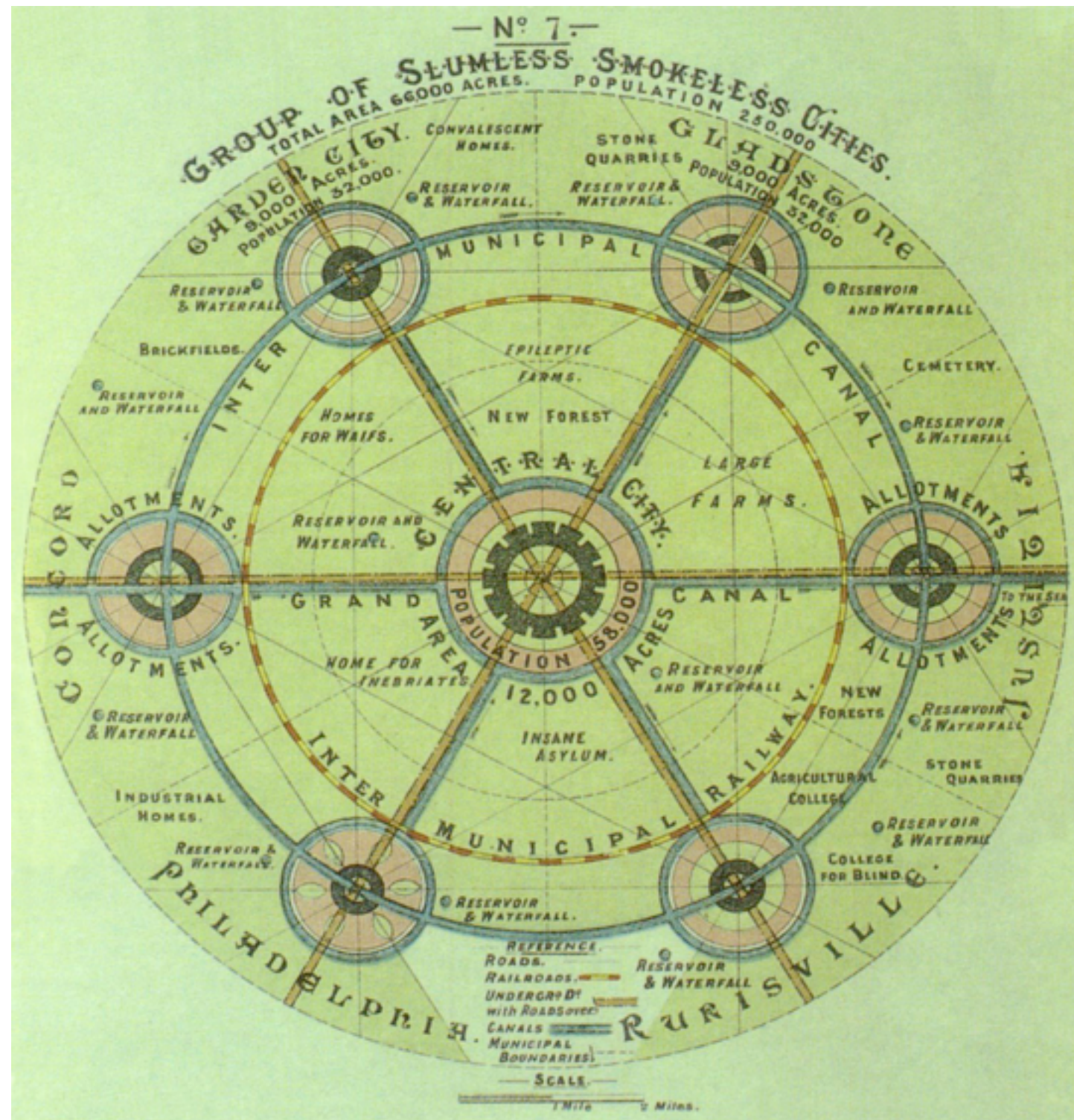
# the coexistence of the compact and of the dispersed



Vale do Ave, Portugal, from the “Invisible Cities” series (B. Moreira)

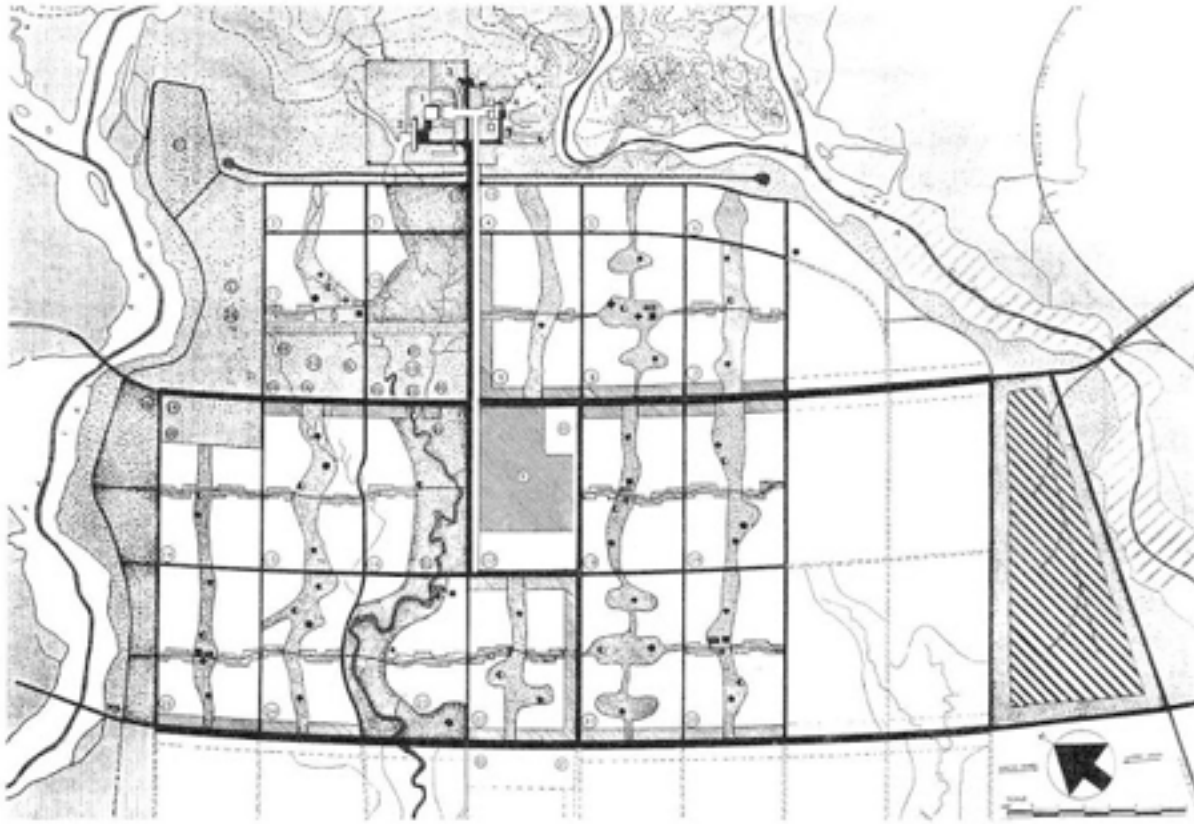


## the coexistence of the compact and of the dispersed





# diversity in the New Towns post-war program

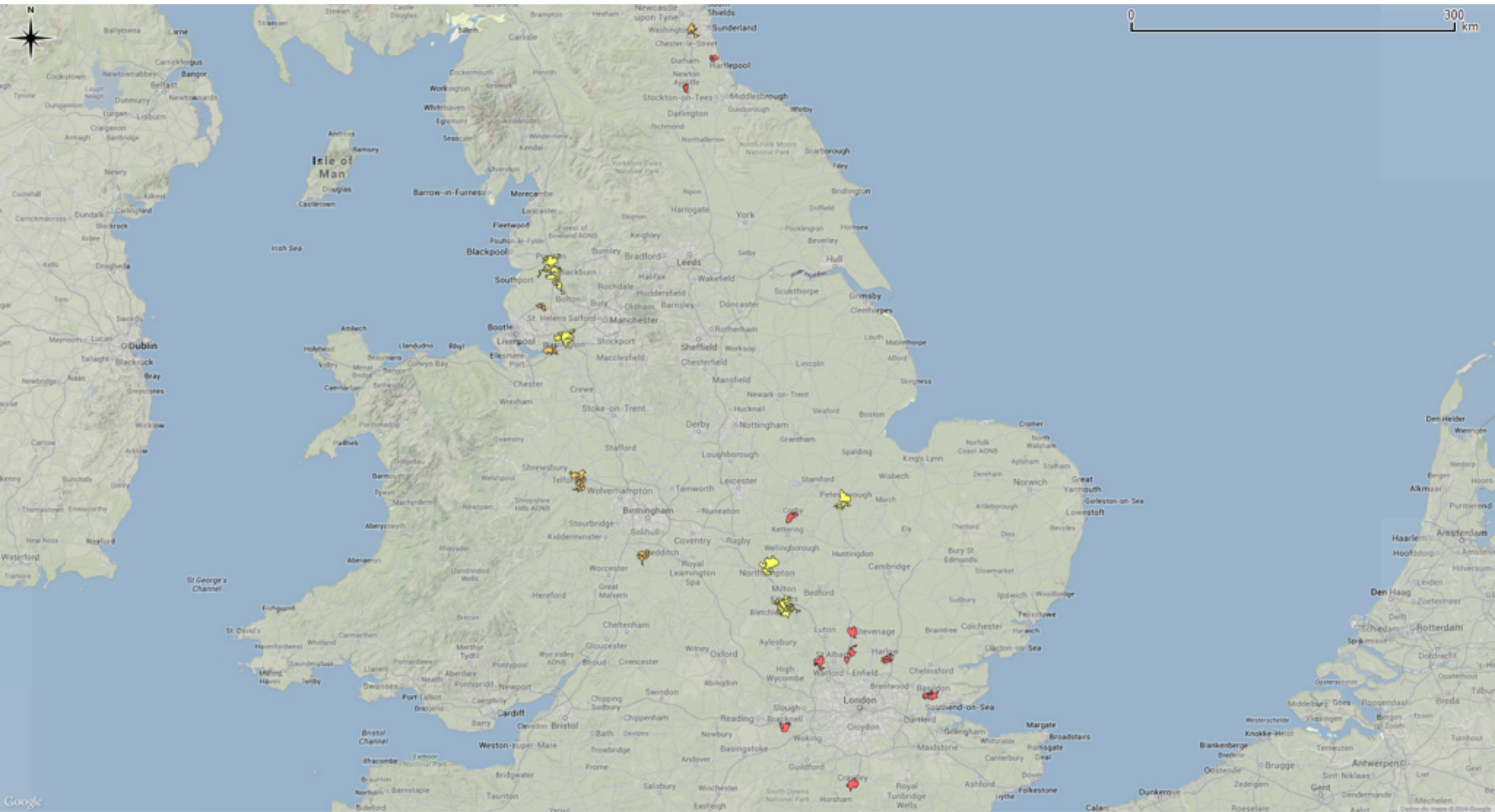


Chandigarh



Brasilia

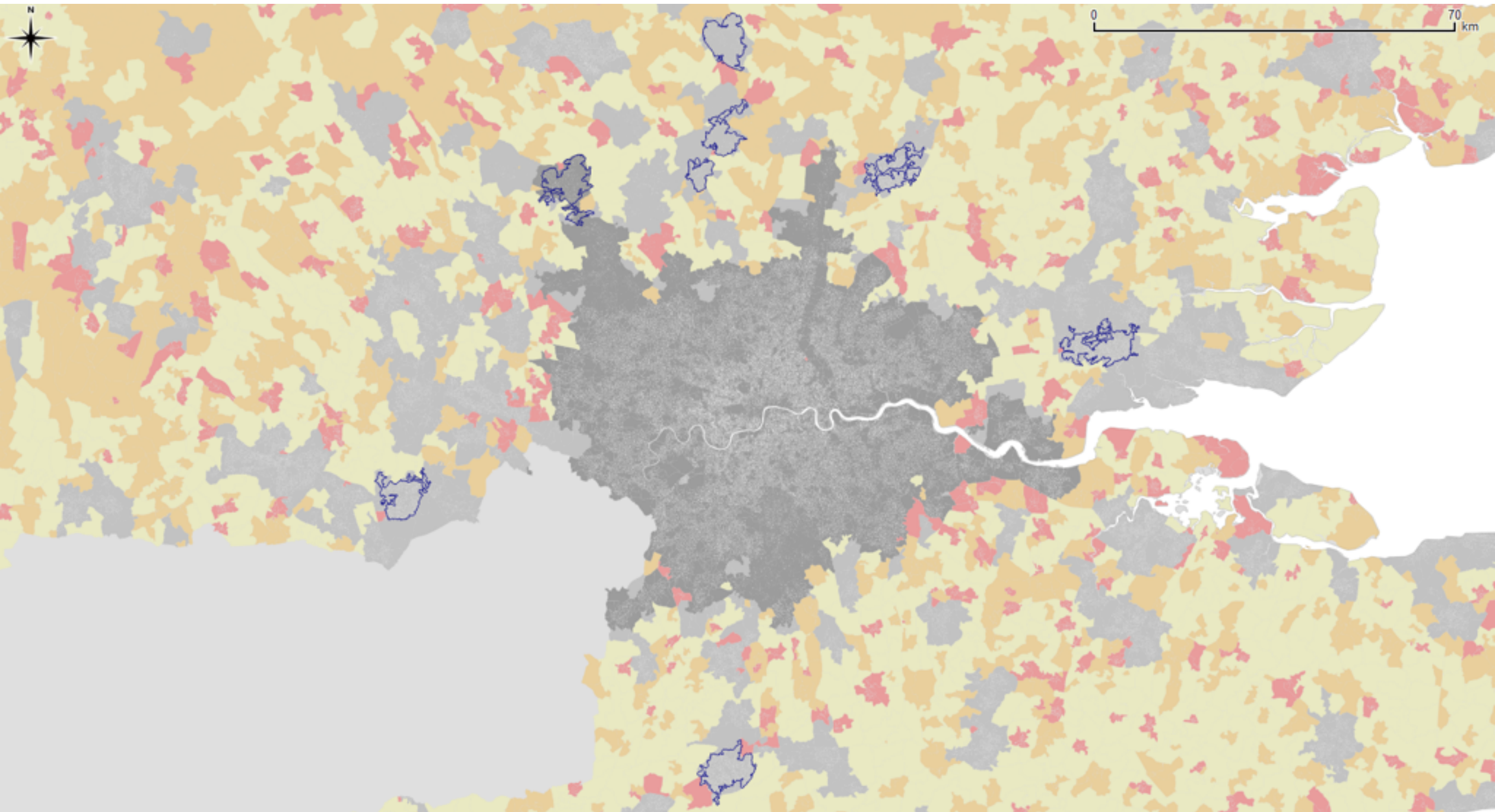
# diversity in the New Towns post-war program



New Town generations (fragment)

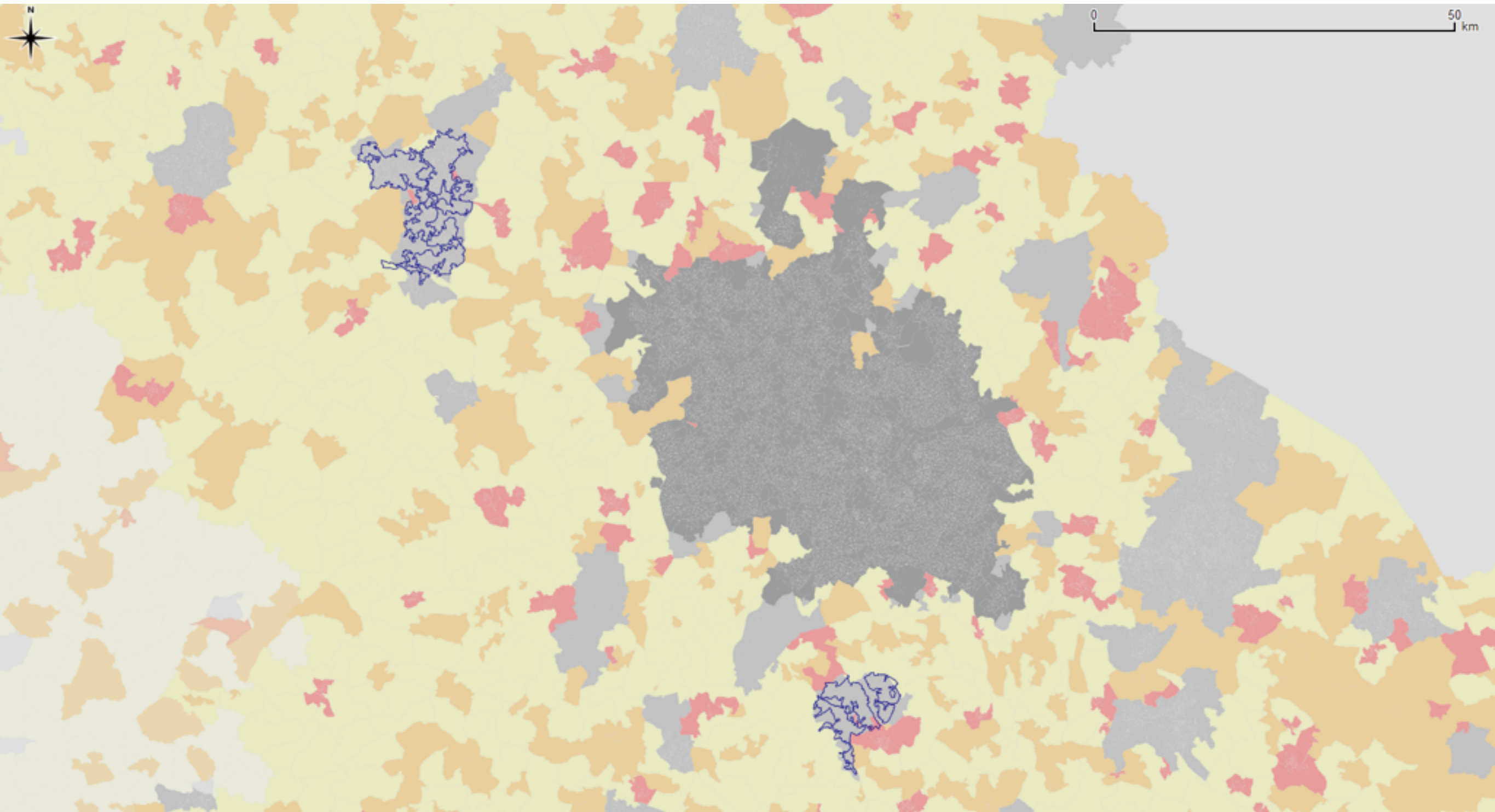


# diversity in the New Towns post-war program



New Towns around London

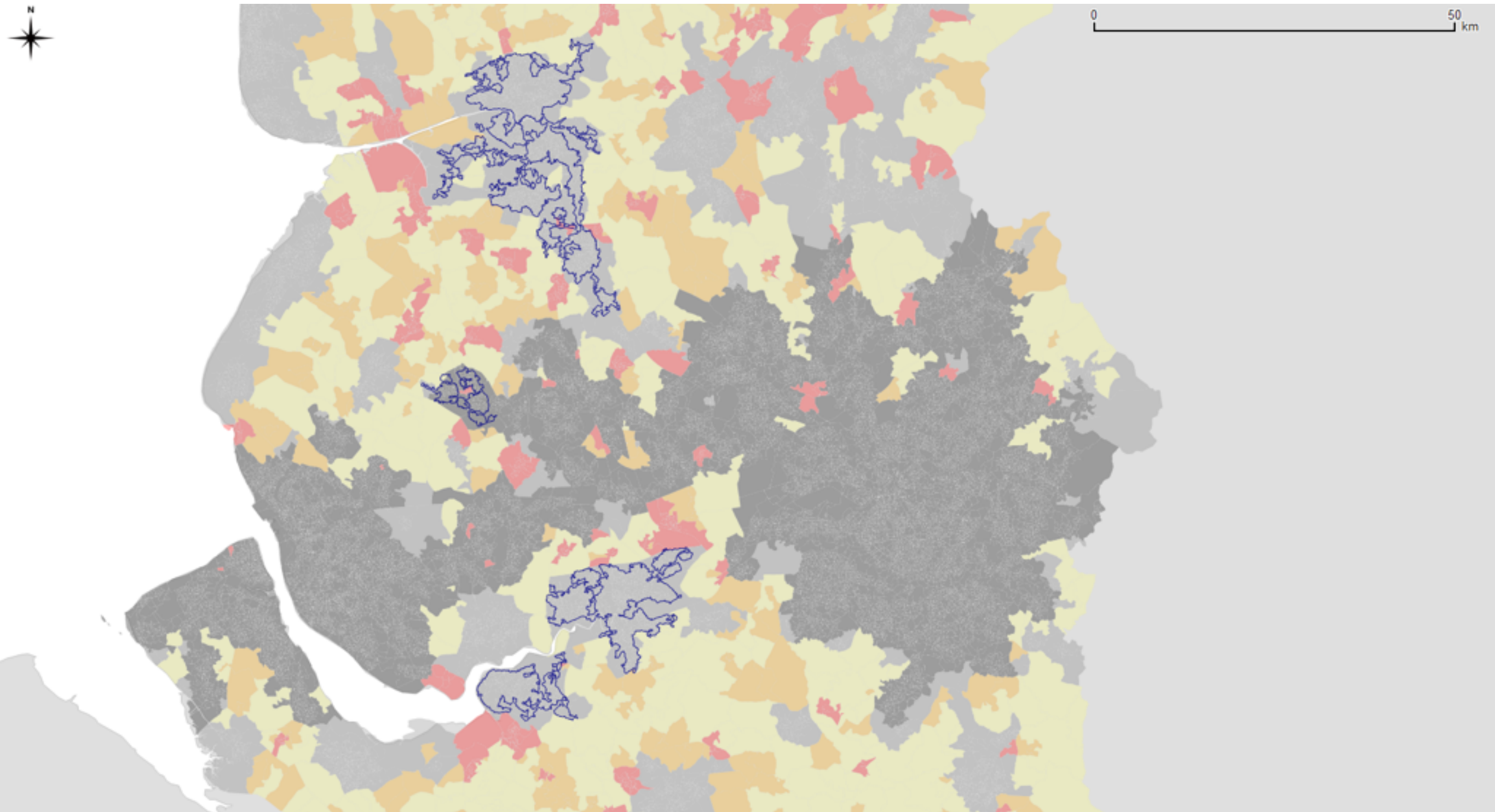
# diversity in the New Towns post-war program



New Towns around Birmingham



# diversity in the New Towns post-war program

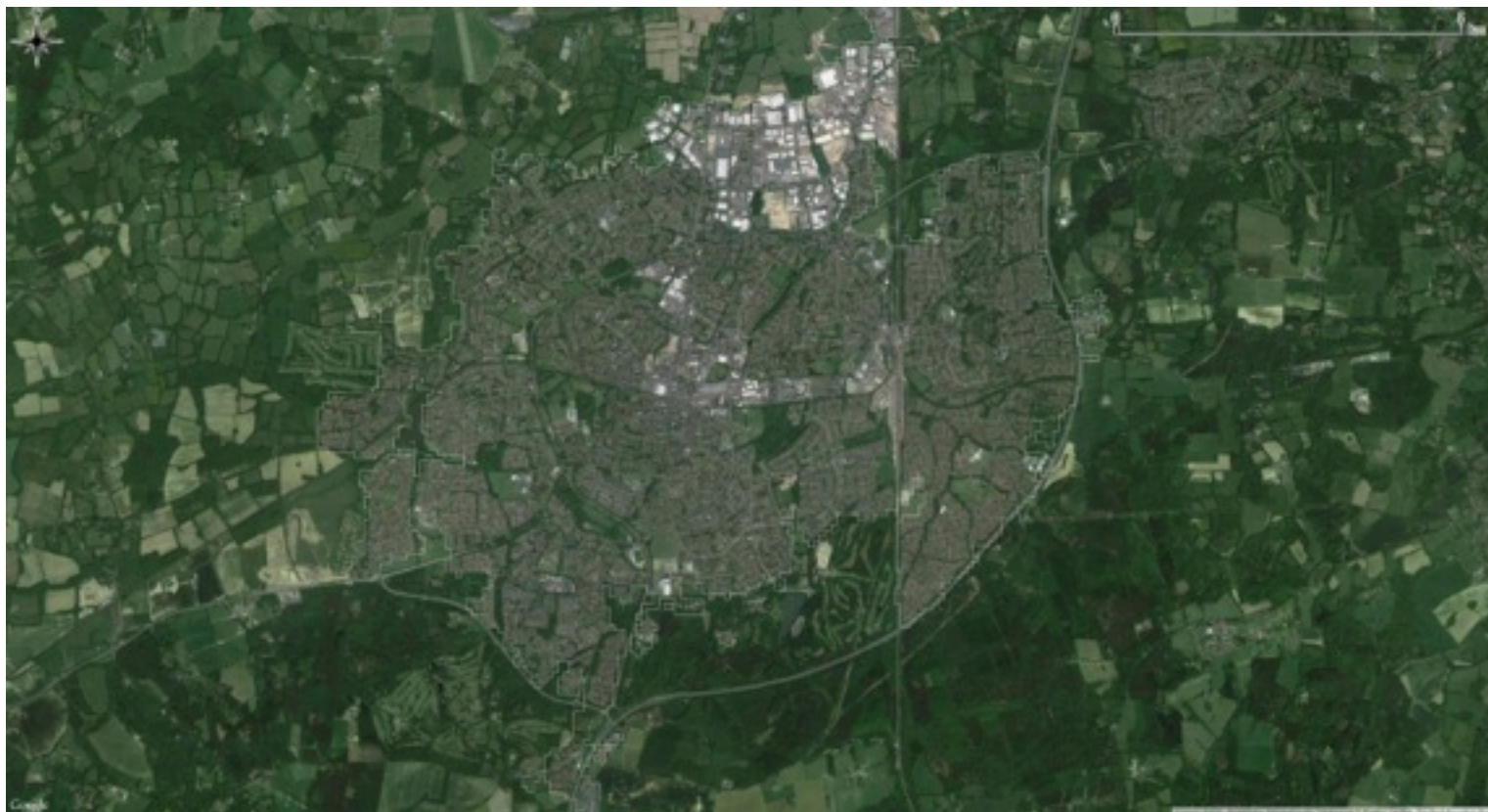


New Towns around Manchester-Liverpool conurbation

## diversity in the New Towns post-war program



Basildon



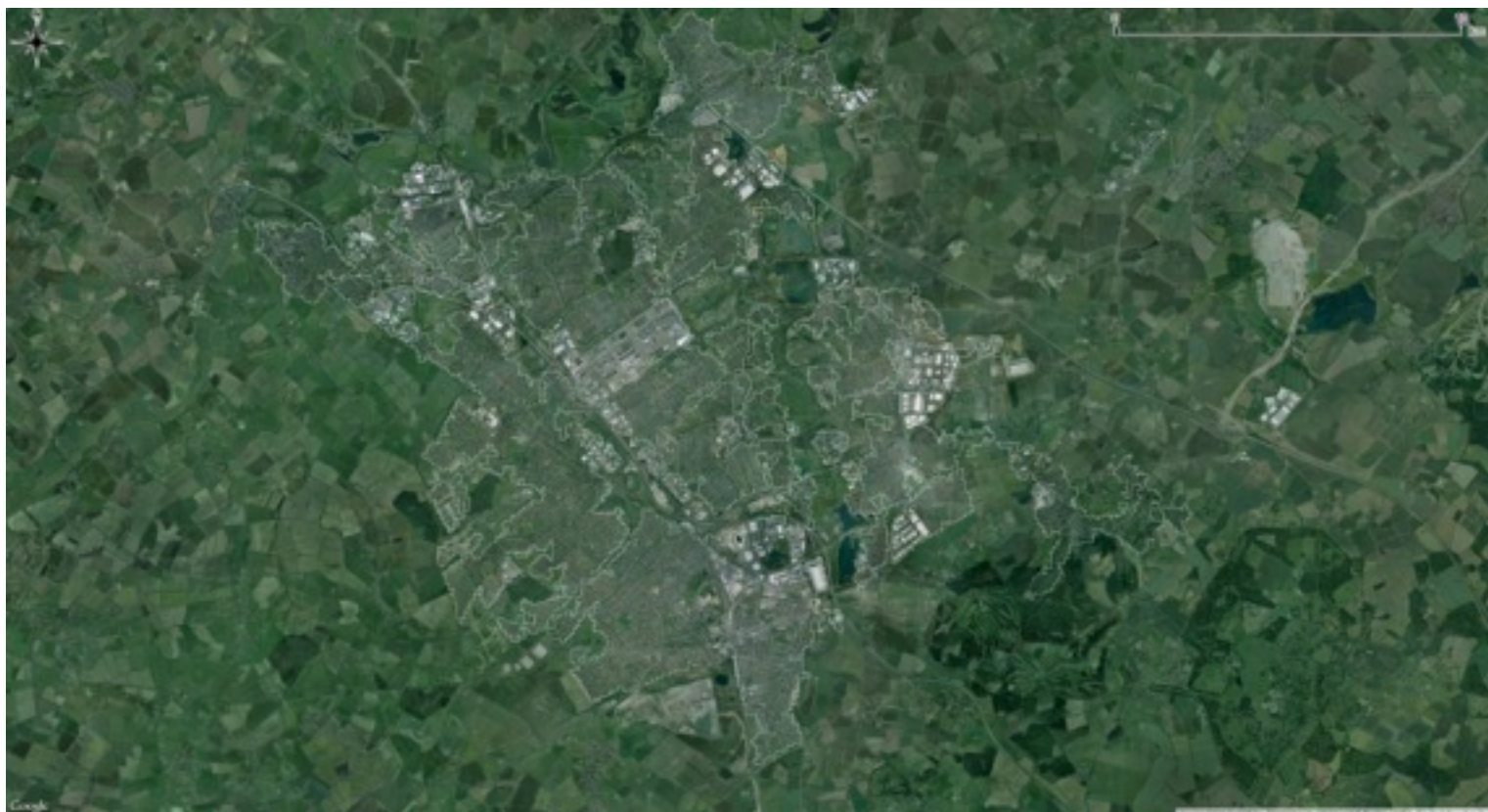
Crawley



# diversity in the New Towns post-war program



Basildon



Milton Keynes



## diversity in the New Towns post-war program



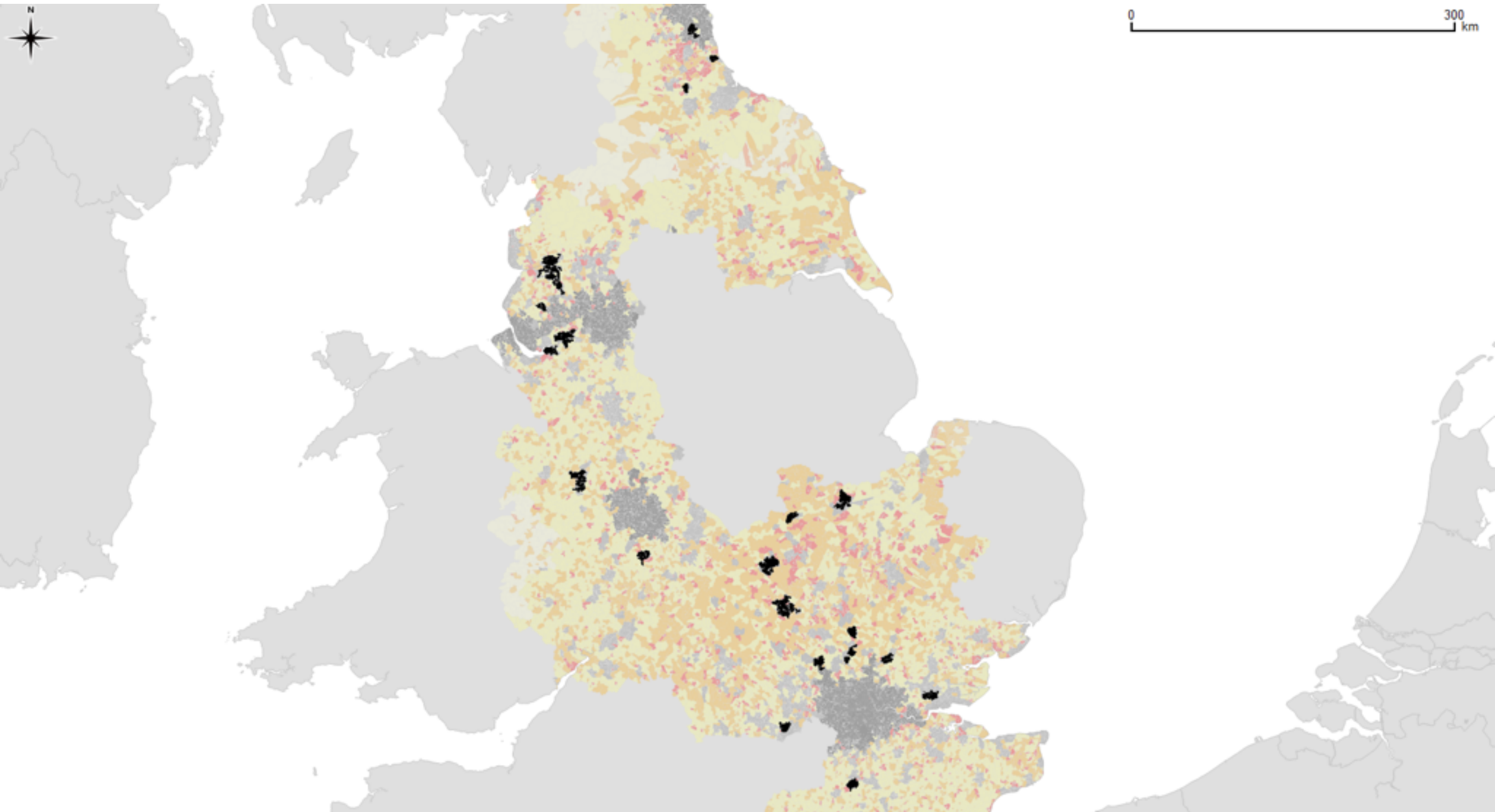
Hatfield



Welwyn



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6. Intentions of self-sufficiency replaced by increased importance of the regional level on connecting communities;
7. need for greater flexibility in contemporary urban planning to better accommodate uncertainty and change;



## the uncertainty of an archetype

We are moving towards an increasingly limited planning, questioned by uncertainty to an extent where one can ask if it's still worth it. Our idealistic visions of city and country are changing. More than persistent and timeless, archetypes are undergoing profound changes and no longer match the reality; and uncertainty appears to be anything but transitory. If we expect to efficiently manage our complex contemporary territories we must find a way to inscribe flexibility into the formal planning system while allowing some extent of responsible informality.

# Thank you

This paper is part of the PhD research project “From informality to formal variability - planning and urban management strategies under uncertainty contexts: the municipality of Santo Tirso between the Provisional Regulations and the review of the Municipal Plan”, which is being supported by FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia - under the QREN-POPH program and the PhD Grant SFRH/BD/86675/2012, and developed in CEAU - Centro de Estudos de Arquitectura e Urbanismo - at the School of Architecture of Porto University - FAUP.

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